



The contribution of local products in establishing sustainable and alternative destinations; case studies silversmithing in Ioannina and silk of Soufli.

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Abstract

The purpose of the dissertation is to examine the extent to which local products influence the visitors to travel in specific destinations and the effect of local products in sustainable tourism development of destinations such as Ioannina and Soufli. The thesis is going to investigate if the enterprises of local products are able to create a unique identity around the products themselves and if they can contribute to powerful and positive destination image. The completion of the dissertation required qualitative and quantitative research in two case studies of Soufli and Ioannina.

Keywords: sustainable tourism, local products, place branding, clusters, heritage.

1. Introduction

This thesis will focus on contribution of local products in establishing sustainable, alternative and responsible travel destinations. The case studies that are selected for the completion of the research are silk of Soufli and silversmithing of Ioannina. These two local products are strongly connected with the cultural and economic life of residents and they can create the suitable conditions for the empowerment of local economy and long-term sustainable tourism in general.

States around the world are using tourism to create an undeniably positive impact on local communities. Greece is well known for its production of delicious and unique products, as well as local souvenirs and handicrafts. Like in every country with high tourist flow, the best places to buy good quality products are the small villages and islands (Timothy, 2005). As Karachalis N. said (2015) “the image, identity and reputation of a city are heavily influenced by cultural heritage, traditions, building stock, modern culture, gastronomy, youth cultures, etc.”. For this reason, the tourism sustainable development of each case study (Soufli and Ioannina) could emanate from the traditions and the total tangible and intangible deposit of the cities (e.g. silk and silversmithing). To understand better the contribution of silk and silversmithing in tourism, two well-structured questionnaires were created for each case and were written in Greek. After the first results of the questionnaires, qualitative research is conducted with in-depth interviews of local entrepreneurs during October

2019, in order to discuss the current and future prospect of silk and silversmithing equally .

The two cities that were selected as case studies are examples of typical Greek cities which produce unique local products and have enterprises that support and utilize wisely the existence of their products. The silk in Soufli is high-quality product with a superb tradition throughout history and important heritage not only locally but nationally as well. On the other hand, the city of Ioannina, that is well known for the variety of remarkable local products, has a great tradition in handcrafted jewelry and silversmithing. The silk of Soufli and the silversmithing of Ioannina could be on the list of intangible heritage of UNESCO due to their historical, cultural and economic dimension to the communities of the two cities. The creation of sustainable long-term plan and the promotion of local products such as silversmithing and silk could act as a catalyst for the socio-economic and tourism development of Ioannina and Soufli as well.

In the second chapter, the literature and the findings from similar academic research will be reviewed in order to highlight the contribution of local products in long-term development of destinations. The next chapter is dedicated to the short presentation of the case studies of Ioannina and Soufli, through the brief reference to demographics, sightseeing, history of silversmithing and silk in two cities respectively, and the short description of thematic museums of silversmith in Ioannina and silk museums of Soufli. In the subsequent chapter will be analyzed the data from quantitative and qualitative research with the assistance of graphs, tables and charts, supported by literature review as well.

2. Literature review

The international economic competition among nations/regions/cities that aims to attract new tourist flow and investments, creates the need of strategic planning and marketing for the empowerment and sustainability of local economies (Evangelou & Tsiliras, 2013). Due to this competition, the cities, regions and nations need to adapt and integrate branding concepts from the mainstream marketing field into their strategic plans. The main goal of the place marketing plan is not only to advertise

the location to potential tourists and investors (Urban, 2002). The idea of city branding and marketing is not only connected with culture and tourism, but with other sectors as well. Today, the field of marketing is influenced by social media and e-marketing gains popularity and these facts are important because the tools for one strategic place marketing plan are changing.

Mainly, the stakeholders are the local population, enterprises, visitors, employees and academics (Hospers, 2011). According to Kotler et al (1993, p. 18), the marketing and branding of a place "intends to enhance the value and image of the site, so that its potential users have full knowledge of its particular advantages" and therefore as to be able to separate this place from other competing destinations. *Place marketing* is a main planning tool that contributes to regional/urban development, but it also constitutes a main principle that supports economic development. Cities are characterized by their necessity to present, in their external environment, a positive image as regards economic development, and for this reason they adopt promotional programs and actions, which they subsequently implement (Hall, 1998). Consequently, the creation of positive image through strategic marketing and branding is essential for the current economic situation in Greece (Defner et al., 2012). Needless to say, that branding is a potential option for places to establish an attractive destination. Successful places attract new investment and create a positive success circle (Rainisto S., 2003). According to Karachalis (2015, p.3) "in recent years the term *place marketing* tends to identify with a new term *place branding*, often causing misinterpretation. The term *place branding* means the attribution of a specific spatial identity to a region or city in order to form a main idea for its characteristics and urban personality". Ritchie B. and Ritchie R. proposed in 1998 the following definition of *destination branding* (p.17): "A Destination Brand is a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience." Kalandides (2012) proposed that an integrated approach of *place branding* should emphasize on networks and cooperation and the different

stakeholders could be “actors and beneficiaries of place development” (<http://www.tafterjournal.it/2012/01/03/place-branding-and-place-identity-an-integrated-approach/>). Branding experts can motivate all stakeholders to participate in order to reach the desired result (Karachalis, 2015).

Although a methodological model has not been established in the international literature, a city marketing plan should include some key elements, summarized in the following steps (Anholt, 2010): analysis, field research, configuration of marketing plan, marketing strategy/ targeting, creation and description of personalized packages in each target group, proposal consultation/ finalization, organizational structure and the role of stakeholders and finally, evaluation.

The model of tourism policy and development in Greece is based on the *classic ideal*, integrated to the general philosophy of protecting the heritage in Greece. In this particular case of tourism policy and development, the role of the state is dominant (Poulios et al., 2015). However, over the last years the tourists coming in Greece try to visit and experience other forms of tourism, considering the model of *classic ideal* commonplace. So according to Poulios et al. (2015, p.109) “there is a need for new model tourism policy and development, which will move away from the *classic ideal* and focus in individual, alternative experiences, while at the same time being less dependent on the state”.

It is worth mentioning that one of the biggest trends in tourism industry nowadays is the experience economy. The tourists need to engage with locals and experience a place ‘like a local’ (<https://www.responsibletravel.com/holidays/responsible-tourism/travel-guide/the-future-of-travel-and-tourism>). This type of travel is more responsible and sustainable in many ways.

Purchase of local products permits engagement with local culture and expanding the destination experience by bringing home a tangible element of it, while also highly benefitting rural tourism destinations. Therefore, local products, towards an effective marketing and branding strategy, may contribute to the sustainable tourism development of the region and attract niche markets all year round.

In this dissertation, the emphasis develops on the cities of Ioannina and Soufli which are both mainland cities of Greece and they are well known for the environmental

richness, the compelling tradition and history and the unexploited tourism possibilities. Similar research was written about the contribution of local products (especially food) in the creation and the promotion of place image of Mesologgi (Evangelou & Tsiliras, 2013).

Apart from the commercial and economic aspect of silversmith in Ioannina and silk in Soufli, these products could be considered as products of high cultural heritage value. The main challenge for tourism industry - according to World Tourism Organization - is to identify and protect intangible heritage through tourism promotion and development. It is crucial to refer that there is a global wealth of traditions and has become one of the principal motivations for travel, with tourists seeking to engage with new cultures and experience the global variety of performing arts, handicrafts, rituals, cuisines, and interpretations of nature and the universe" (<http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/summaryview.pdf>). In our case studies, intangible and tangible heritage are connected because tangible is the final object such as the jewelry from a silversmith worker of Ioannina or the silk shirt of Soufli and intangible is the skill/technique or heritage and tradition through generations of craftsmen and producers. Therefore, Academia declares that heritage and shopping can be intertwined and formulate an attractive leisure environment in both rural and urban areas. Heritage and history in conjunction with leisure retail development may lay the foundations for urban regeneration, attracting new customers. As in our case studies, the mix of shopping and heritage can act as a catalyst for the declining industries like the silk factories and the silversmithing laboratories, bringing new investments, infrastructure and economic prosperity (Timothy, 2005).

In digital era, destinations must remain competitive and creative, because there is a more and more customized demand from tourists. One rapidly developing field that destinations should follow is the creative tourism. According to C. Couret (in Gursoy et al., 2015) *creative tourism* "refers to the process of co-creation, between tourists and local community, in a new form of 'making' tourism and not just 'consuming' it... This led us to consider another definition of the creative tourism that would focus on the creativity as a tool to satisfy the tourist's special interests. To reach that, destinations need to develop a governance process based on networks between different

stakeholders from private sector/tour operators/hotels etc. to public authorities. The choice of most effective governance plan depends on trust, size of the network, goal consensus and the need for network-level competencies (Provan and Kenis, 2007 in Gursoy et. al, 2015).

It is worth mentioning that tourism is one of the fastest economic sectors and can make a great deal of profit in cities, regions and nations in general. The role of entrepreneurship is vital both in economy growth and tourism development. As Nongsiej P. and Shimray S. (2017, p.2) said “entrepreneurship is the utmost and an imperative facet of economic growth in the past and the contemporary era. Entrepreneurship is the motion of venturing into a new business or businesses, captivating on the risks in the optimism of making a maximum turnover”. The tourism sector assist in the job creation and maintain business development especially in rural areas (Nongsiej P. and Smiray S., 2017). The responsibility of public authorities is to create a mentality of entrepreneurship activity into the societies, developing the context in which people can develop skills and capabilities to start a business (Chuvakhina et al., 2018). The role of entrepreneurs and their activity will be crucial in the sustainable tourism development of destinations through the promotion of local products such as silk of Soufli and silversmith products of Ioannina.

In order to become and remain a destination more competitive, it is necessary to be innovative continuously and create clusters. According to Porter (1998, p.78) “clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field”, promoting both competition and collaboration. In this research, that focus on sustainable development of two Greek destinations (Soufli and Ioannina) through their local products, the creation of a cluster will provide an adequate opportunity to thrive in many aspects (economy, cultural activity, tourism, commercial and social life). Due to economic crisis of Greece, the problems in every aspect of life exist and the country do not already have the mentality of synergies. In case of Greece, policy makers should lay the foundations for the creation of clusters: “improving education and skill levels, building capacity in technology, opening access to capital markets, and improving institutions. Over time, additional investment in more cluster-specific assets is necessary” (Porter, 1998, p.86). However, to reap the benefits of

successful networking and cooperation, local stakeholders of silk in Soufli and silversmith in Ioannina must work together with other sectors such as food and attraction/sightseeing sector in order to create network from complementarity (Hall and Mitchell, 2005). We need to underline that “cooperation and building business networks also allows for the organic growth of tourism products in an area, increasing the chances of long-term sustainability and the attraction of investment into the area” (Hall et al., 2005, p.5).

3. The case studies

3.1 Ioannina

Demographics and sightseeing

Ioannina is located in the northwestern part of mainland Greece, in the center of the homonymous basin. The city of Ioannina is the largest city of Epirus region and the capital of regional unit of Ioannina. The city was built on the Egnatia Road, the road that connects Europe with Asia, one of the most ancient roads in the world (Travelioanina.com). According to the census of 2011 the population of Ioannina is 65,574 inhabitants and it is one of the largest cities in Greece with rich cultural tradition throughout the ages.

“Ioannina city and the surrounding area is filled with colorful traditions, mythical legends and endless choices for entertainment that will satisfy even the toughest crowd” as the official travel website travelioannina.com says about this destination. It is worth mentioning that the city is very vivid because it has 15.000 students from a variety of university faculties.

From the Stone Age, the ancient Greek civilizations, the Roman empire and the Byzantines, through to the Ottoman pashas and the modern Greek state shaped the unique multicultural heritage of the city: six museums, a primordial cave, art galleries, twelve churches, one synagogue, sixteen monasteries, twelve well

preserved monuments from Muslim presence to the city, and an interesting variety of townhouses and public buildings of architectural character.

One outstanding geographical characteristic of the area is the Lake Pamvotida which is ideal for walking, fishing and drinking coffee near to the lake coast, according to discovergreece.com. Therefore, the little island of Byzantines is plenty of byzantine history with many churches such as Saint Panteleimon's historic church in which was killed Ali pasha.

Finally, the castle of Ioannina that is "crossroads of cultures and religions. And high above, the Kale, the Acropolis: a cultural park with small museums and collections" (https://www.travelioannina.com/once_upon_the_castle) which incorporates the museum of Silversmithing of Ioannina as well.

The city of Ioannina has a rich variety of accommodation, from 2-star to 5-star luxurious hotels and available apartments for rent in platforms like booking.com and Airbnb.com. More specific, there are 111 accommodation choices in booking.com. It is worth mentioning that many visitors, who travel in Epirus region, stay in popular places such as Metsovo, Zagorochoria and Jumerka and they visit Ioannina only for one day and/or one afternoon. Due to its total capacity, there is an effort for the promotion of Ioannina as MICE destination over the last years.

The history of silversmithing in Ioannina

Silversmithing is one of the most important techniques of folk art. From the formatting of a metal mass for utilitarian purposes, silversmiths evolve into art by producing artifacts of secular and ecclesiastical silversmith throughout the ages. Silversmiths connects directly with the cultural identity and the productive history of Epirus region. "The art of silversmith on the continent seems to have its origins in the later Byzantine years. More specifically, there are exquisite Byzantine ecclesiastical utensils, an art of 14-century style. In various monasteries of Greece (Meteora, Mount Athos, Edessa) that were donated by the Despot of Ioannina" (Noutsou, 2017 in Papakitsou, 2018, p.29). It reached its peak in the second half of the 18th and early 19th century after

the liberation of the city from the Ottomans, leaving to the next generations important know-how and works of art (Papakitsou, 2018). Furthermore, silversmithing is a manual job that aims to make sales and economic profit but at the same time it has shown outstanding artistic creation throughout the centuries across the Europe. In 1930 it was founded and operates in the town of Silversmith school, called "Asimourgeion" and was housed in the boarding house of Georgios Stavrou. This school was a milestone for the continuation and further development of silversmith in Ioannina. Due to second world war, it stopped the operation in 1940, having continued afterwards until 1969. The products of silversmithing of Ioannina are among the most famous local products of Epirus along with traditional desserts, cheese and tsipouro, as is referred to the online questionnaire created for this research. From the touristic aspect, local products have the potential to amplify the visitor experience by connecting the tourists to the culture and tradition of each territory. Nowadays, there are 90 workshops under the Ioannina Silversmiths Association, offering apprenticeship according to traditional standards to the next generation of craftsmen (<https://news.gtp.gr/2019/02/28/ioanninas-silversmithery-museum-gem-admired/>).

The Silversmithing Museum into the castle of Ioannina

The Silversmithing Museum is situated into the castle of Ioannina, and more specifically in the western bastion of the north-eastern acropolis (Its Kale) and it was inaugurated 2016. It occupies the bastion's two levels, as well as the adjacent building of the old cookhouses. This museum is a member of Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation and it was made through European Union funding program. The official website of Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation (<http://www.piop.gr/en/diktuo-mouseiwn/Mouseio-Argyrotexnias/to-mouseio.aspx>) declares that the objective of the museum is to preserve our knowledge of Epirote silversmithing and to spread information about its technology to the wider audience. It could be called as a thematic museum, concerning the technology of silversmithing during the pre-industrial period, while simultaneously being a regional museum, because it focuses on the history of silversmithing art in the region of Epirus. Temporally, the exhibition refers essentially to the post-Byzantine period, from the 15th century and then, but

without excluding references to the recent past. The goal of the museum is not only to show the work of silversmith in Epirus through the years, but to preserve also the intangible history and tradition of this silver art who play a key role to the economy and the culture of Ioannina.

3.2 Soufli

Demographics and sightseeing

The Soufli is the seat of Soufli's Municipality; a city in the prefecture of Evros, which belongs to the Greek domain. Northeast of Alexandroupolis and southwest of Orestiada, located on the side of the hill of Profitis Ilias, one of the last hills of Rodopi. Soufli is small city of Evros prefecture and it is very close to Alexandroupoli, the last Greek city before the Turkish borders. The city center is only 500 meters from Evros river. According to the last census, Soufli has 3,837 inhabitants and it is well known for the silk production and export. The official site of municipality of Soufli (<https://www.soufli.gr/index.php/el/2015-03-01-20-56-3/2015-03-01-21-10-09/2015-05-17-17-40-05>) declares that there is evidence of human presence in the region from Neolithic era. During the Ottoman ages, Soufli is important cultural, economic and politic center due to sericulture. The establishment of the railway station in 1872 contributed significantly to its economic development. The population grew dramatically and while in 1877 it had around 4,680 inhabitants in 1908 it went up to 12,000-13,000. Soufli which is known mainly for silk, 4 factories are created (of Azaria and Pappo (1908), by Tzivre (1920), by P. Hadjisavva, Tsiakiris (1954), and the State factory. There were also 4 steam-powered flour mills and several sesame oil production units. The first decades of 19th century the main factories of silk processing were founded such as Azaria & Pappo and Tzivre, which is cultural center to date. Therefore, viticulture and wineries were quickly developed those years. The introduction of the silk trade in the tax framework of Greece in 1923 has reduced production and exports to other countries. The final and most powerful blow came

with the discovery of the artificial silk thread. This stopped the rising movement of the Soufli's sericulture. Nowadays, there are 5 weaving and production of silk crafts as well as shops that trade silk products.

Regarding the accommodation capacity of the city, Soufli has 4 quite small hotels. Usually, visitors come to see the museums and the silk shops of Soufli for one day, choosing to stay in Alexandroupoli or Kavala, which are bigger and more cosmopolitan cities.

The history of silk in Soufli

Silk has a long history which is intertwined with Chinese myths and according to silkroadfoundation.org "for more than two thousand years the Chinese kept the secret of silk altogether to themselves. It was the most zealously guarded secret in history". The art of silkworm breeding and silk processing was accidentally discovered by Empress Shi League chi around 2690 B.C.; according to legend the Empress drank in her royal garden tea when suddenly a cocoon fell into the boiling water of tea. In trying to get her out, she pulled an extremely thin but resilient thread, the first silky fiber. Since then, the sericulture flourished secretly in Chinese empire for 2.000 years. The secret was transferred to Japan the 8th century B.C. (<http://silkroadfoundation.org/artl/silkhistory.shtml>). Then, during the campaigns of Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C., silk became known to the ancient Greeks and the Romans. Until the 5th century B.C. the control of silk belonged to the Persians and the Syrians. According to traditions, the spread of sericulture from the East to the West was made by the monks of Byzantium during their tours for the spread of Christianity. At the end of their tour, in 554 A.D., they smuggled silkworm eggs into their hollow mongoose. At the time, large sericulture centers emerged Corinth, Thebes and Kos. Since the beginning of the 16th century, the processing of silkworm and the production of silk has become an industrial form and is aware of continuous technological development in the 18th century. The major silk processing and marketing centers around Europe that existed at the time were Lyon, Tour and Avignon in France as well as Genoa, Venice, Florence and Como in Italy.

In 1882 the presentation of the synthetic fiber at the Paris International Trade Fair was a decisive event that reduced the production of silk in Europe in the following decades. For several centuries, the breeding of Silkworm was a traditional form of employment of the local population in Andrianopolis. The areas around the river Evros are indicated for the planting of mulberry trees and the area of Soufli played a key role in sericulture due to its suitable ground. Almost all the inhabitants of Soufli deal with silk either as producers or as factory workers or as traders. At the beginning of 1880, Soufli appears as an important sericulture center that produced 40% of the silk cocoon of the Ottoman area of Andrianopolis.

The two museums of Silk in Soufli

Soufli and silk are intertwined and almost synonymous. The small city of Soufli has two museums of Silk that show the different stages of production and aspects of past golden era for the society of the region. The first one is the Silk Museum, which is member of Piraeus Bank's museum network and the second is the Museum of Silk Art, which was created by Tsiakiris' silk firm.

The Silk Museum of Piraeus Bank Cultural Foundation presents the different stages of sericulture and silk manufacturing in detail and focuses on how the town of Soufli became a major silk-producing center in the late 19th through to the mid-20th century. The Silk Museum displays the pre-industrial procedure of silkworm rearing and the processing of silk. Therefore, it presents the history of silk from China, where it was accidentally discovered in 3000 B.C., until our days. This museum of Piraeus bank's museum network transfer us to the architectural, social and economic context of the period that "made the town of Soufli a major silk-producing center in Greece" (<http://www.piop.gr/en/diktuo-mouseiwn/Mouseio-Metaxis/to-mouseio.aspx>) . All the stages of silk production are supported by audiovisual material. The museum was funded by European Union as the museum of Silversmithing in Ioannina.

The silk house Tsiakiris, which participates actively 60 years in the production of silk in Soufli, "created with love and passion a unique multi-space in the center of the city of

Soufli. Its purpose is to highlight and rescue the rich tradition of the region in silk art” (<http://www.visitsoufli.com/listings/μουσείο-τέχνης-μεταξιού-τσιρκίη/>) .

4. Research methodology

Case study was used for this dissertation, giving in-depth examination of the case in order to provide as complete a picture as possible. Therefore, to achieve our study objectives the research followed qualitative methods; in particular, in-depth interviews with local entrepreneurs were conducted during October 2019, based on a series of open-ended questions, trying to develop a conceptual framework for the topic. The interlocutor from Ioannina was Moschos Thodoris, who is working in silversmithing sector and lives in Ioannina and the interview with him was conducted online in 22nd October 2019. The interlocutor from Soufli was Mouhtaridis Kostas, who is entrepreneur of silk and lives in Soufli and the interview was realized in Thessaloniki in 4th October 2019. Also, two online questionnaires were created in September 2019 in Greek in order to notice the visitors’ opinions and beliefs about the contribution of local products in Ioannina and Soufli as well. These online surveys were cross-sectional and were distributed via Internet and social media groups to local entrepreneurs, journalists, museum specialists, visitors of all ages and target groups and residents and were open to the audience from mid- September to late October. The stratification strategy (sampling) was followed, which refers to the probability of all members of a population being involved in research (probability sampling) and more specifically can be classified as a population stratification, feasibility and convenience (purposive/convenience). The main criterion was only the visit of participant either in Ioannina either to Soufli. In addition, secondary data (documentation, perception research and literature) were utilized, having visualized better the research plan and its objectives.

The outcome will be a full and rounded understanding of the existing situation of marketing and branding strategy of silk and silversmithing products in Soufli and

Ioannina correspondingly and the potential possibilities in tourism and sustainability of destinations.

5. Data analysis of case study 1: Ioannina

The first step of the research was the design of quantitative research plan and the creation of online survey about the opinions and beliefs of visitors and residents of Ioannina. The main goals of the questionnaire are the following:

- the projection of distinctive characteristics of city's identity,
- the diagnosis of the depth of the recognition of silversmithing as tourism product,
- the diagnosis of the extent to which all stakeholders could be more aware, mobilized and collaborate harmoniously towards the creation and promotion of a new tourism identity around the products and technique of silversmithing for Ioannina, which could lay the foundations for the creation, communication and branding of new place image for Ioannina,
- the identification of the extent to which the art of silversmithing and the museum of silversmithing in the castle of Ioannina could positively contribute to the attraction of new investments, tourism groups and new economic activities,
- The measurement of the public's knowledge and opinion about the local products of Ioannina and their potential contribution to the tourism sector.

The final number of participants are 97 and one participant did not visit Ioannina and he/she is not included to data analysis. Consequently, 96 responses are collecting and analyzing through google form questionnaire. This questionnaire was online one month from mid-September to mid-October 2019 and it is distributed to various groups and local stakeholders. Then, the results were downloaded into excel form and were coded all responses as it seems in picture 1.

Αρχείο

Κεντρική

Εισαγωγή

Διάταξη σελίδας

Τύποι

Δεδομένα

Αναθεώρηση

Προβολή

Βοήθεια

Power Pivot

Κοινή χρήση

Σχόλια

E102

✕

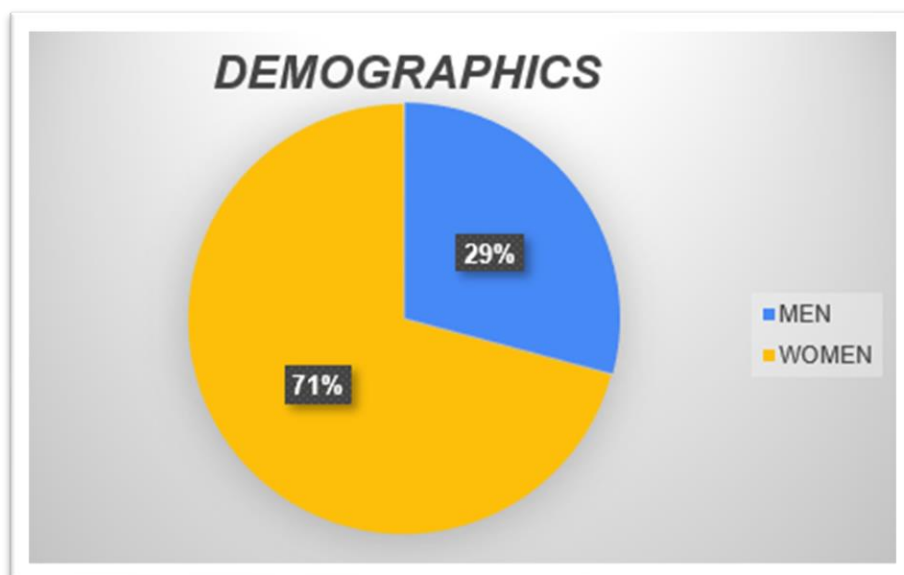
✓

fx

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
1																	
2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q11	Q11	Q11	Q11	Q11	Q12
3											sensibilization	new enterpr.jobs	local econ.	new tourism	re-brand	empowerm.	cluster
4		1	2	2	1	1	1	0	1	0		1	1	1	1	0	1
5		1	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
6		1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
7		1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	0		0	1	0	1	1	1
8		1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
9		1	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	0		1	1	1	1	0	1
10		1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	0		1	1	1	1	1	1
11		1	1	2	1	1	3	2	0			1	1	1	0	1	1
12		1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
13		1	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
14		1	2	2	1	1	6	0	1	0		0	0	1	1	0	1
15		1	2	2	0	1	6	0	1	0		0	1	1	1	1	1
16		1	2	2	1	1	1	0	1	0		0	1	1	1	0	1
17		1	1	2	0	1	6	2	1	0		1	1	0	0	0	1
18		1	2	2	1	1	4	0	1	0		1	1	1	1	1	1
19		1	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	0		1	1	0	0	1	1
20		1	1	3	0	3	3	0	1	0		0	0	0	0	0	1
21		1	2	2	0	1	4	0	1	0		0	0	1	1	0	1
22		1	2	2	1	3	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
23		1	2	3	1	3	3	0	1	0		0	0	1	1	1	0
24		1	2	2	1	1	3	0	1	0		0	1	1	0	0	0
25		1	1	2	1	1	6	0	0	0		0	1	1	0	1	1
26		1	1	2	1	1	5	2	0	0		0	0	0	0	1	1
27		1	2	2	2	3	1	0	1	0		1	0	1	0	1	1

(picture 1, coding of questionnaire of Ioannina).

About the demographics of questionnaire, the 68 participants were women and the other 28 were men as we observe in next pie chart (picture 2). The most common age group is 25-34 over 54% and then 18-24, 35-44 and 45-60.



(picture 2, pie chart about the analogy men and women).

The fourth question was about the knowledge of participants regarding place branding. The average of answers was 0,718. This evidence can be translated as *yes* because most respondents tick the box *yes*. It seems that the participants were familiarized with the term of *place branding*. However, the audience should not confuse place branding with advertisement, slogans and logos. These can be a step of process but not the focus of place, region or nation branding according to [placebrandobserver.com](https://placebrandobserver.com/difference-place-branding-marketing-explained/). Therefore, it is essential to underline that *place branding* is a place making process and it is a different term from *place marketing* (<https://placebrandobserver.com/difference-place-branding-marketing-explained/>) .

The following question was an open-ended question and the participants had to write shortly some keywords about the identity of Ioannina and its distinctiveness among other Greek cities. The responses were coded for the data analysis into six main categories:

- for the report about the lake Pamvotida, nature and unique beauty,
- for the history, the castle, the traditions and the unique and picturesque architecture,
- for the silversmithing and other local products,
- for the report in the lifestyle, gastronomy and active student life,
- other that cannot be classified answer.

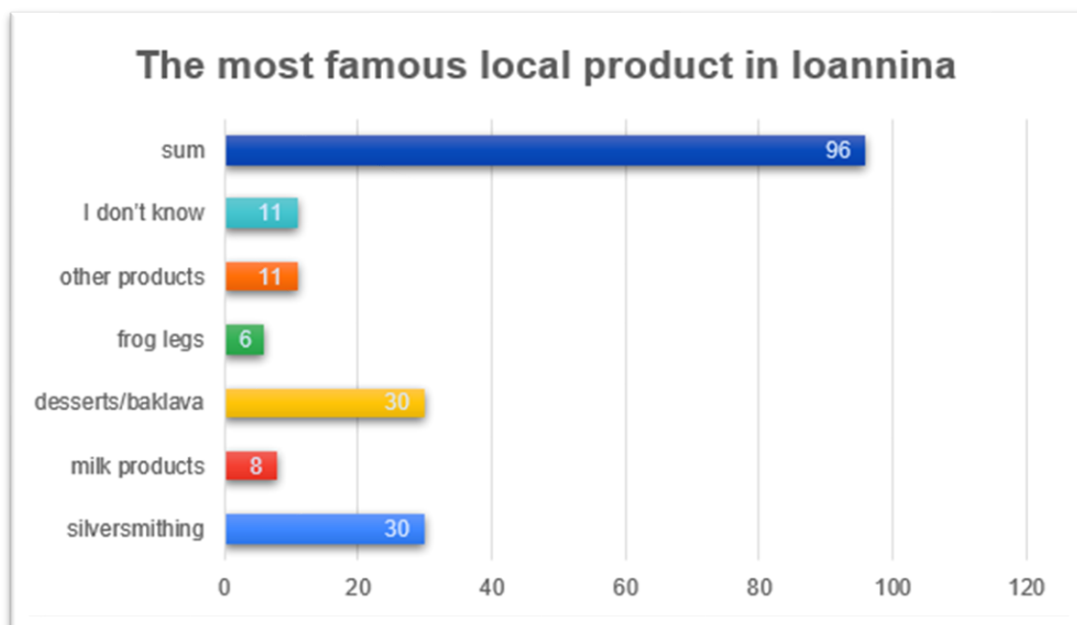
We observe from the descriptive statistics that the mean is 1 and it means that the most occurring answer about the identity of Ioannina is the lake and the natural beauty of the city and its surroundings and not so much the local products. Ioannina and Epirus region in general has a magnificent natural beauty which ideal for hiking, extreme sports and other alternative forms of tourism. Another intense evidence of the city's identity is its own history and tradition. Many participants of the online survey wrote that the Ottoman evidence is present around the city, likewise Ali Pasha and the local legends and folk traditions.

As far as the most famous local product of Ioannina is concerned, visitors had had the opportunity to shortly write the product in questionnaire. This type of question was

open-ended, but it requires a short answer. In the stage of data analysis, 6 main categories of products were created for coding and visualizing the results:

- 1) Silver, silversmithing, jewelry
- 2) Feta dodoni, galotyri, dairy products
- 3) Traditional desserts such as baklava
- 4) Frog legs
- 5) Hookah, tsipouro, chicken and other products
- 6) Respondents who do not know/no answer.

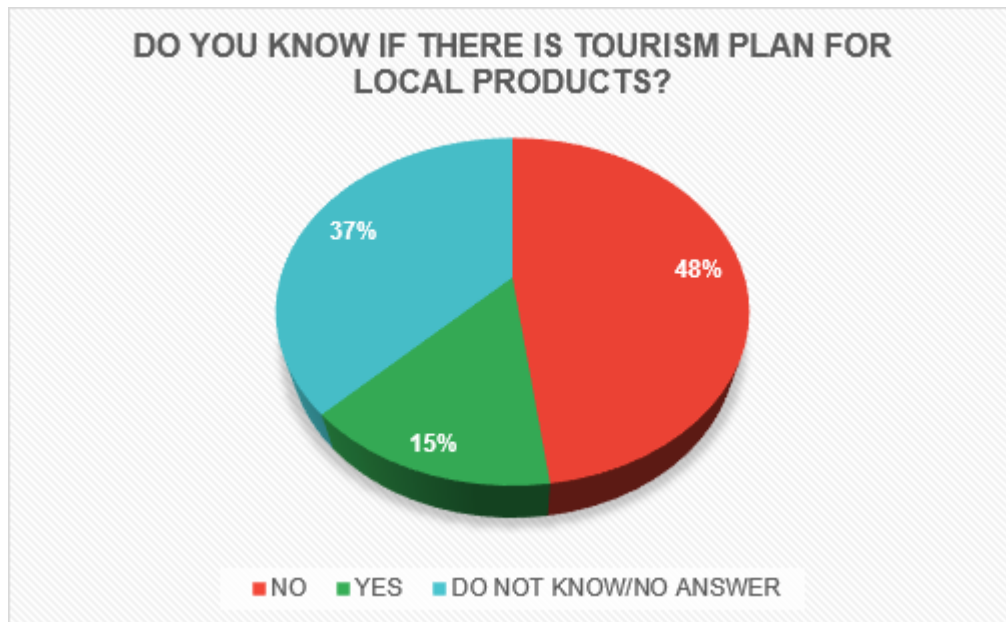
The results of this question were very interesting because the visitors and the participants of the survey know that the most popular and distinctive products of Ioannina are the silver products which are created by artisans and traditional desserts like baklava and kadaifi. As we see in image 3, desserts and silversmithing products came out evenly (30 and 30 times written in answers). These products could be iconic and brand ambassadors for the city of Ioannina, and they could create a unique place identity around them.



(picture 3).

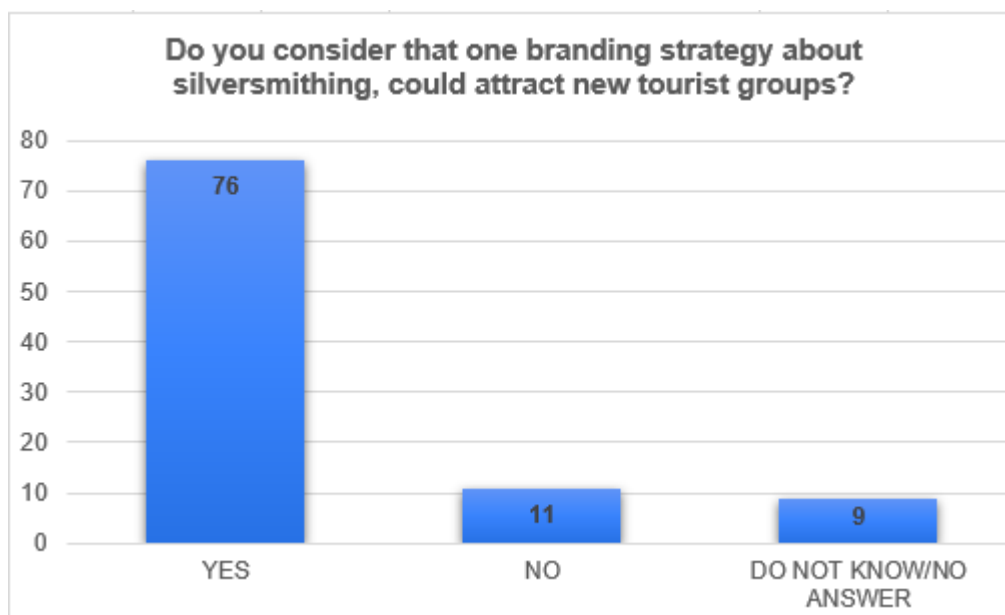
However, Ioannina is famous for the variety of local products except desserts and silversmithing products. According to www.about-ioannina.gr the visitors can choose exceptional wines such as Zitsa wine, tsipouro, dairy products and high-quality poultry, while all products are produced in city and the villages of the region. Mister Moschos that lives and works in silversmith sector in Ioannina through our online in-depth interview in 22nd October 2019, said that “Silversmith, dairy products, museums (historical and religious), natural wealth, virgin areas for hiking, ecotourism, alternative tourism” (see Appendix B.) differentiate Ioannina as a destination and the visitors can choose it against other destinations.

In question 7, the participants were obliged to answer if they know the existence of a tourism and marketing plan for the local products of Ioannina which will be addressed to the potential tourists. As we observe in picture 4, the majority answered no (48%). It is true that it is not exist a concrete destination marketing plan about the local products of Ioannina, and more specific about the silversmithing products of the city. But the last years, one branding and design firm that is called Colibri “did the research, proposed the system of values, the desired description and the tagline of the destination, created the foreign language presentations and already works for his online presence, for the account of the Committee on Tourism representing the Cooperating bodies” (<https://www.colibri.gr/el/content/ωάvvvva>) . This campaign would like to show not only the unique beauty of Ioannina’s nature but to give prominence to MICE tourism (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) as the main way for the development of tourism in the region.



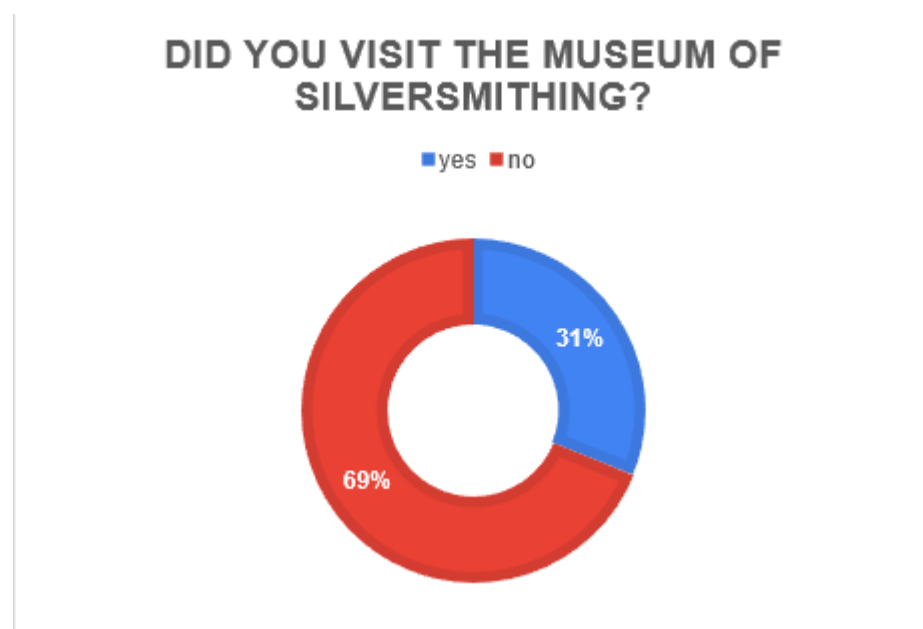
(Picture 4).

In Question 8, the participants had to select if they consider or not that the creation of one branding image about silversmithing products could attract new groups of tourists in Ioannina. We might say that the answer yes was selected from the preponderance of participants (image 5), because 76 from 96 total participants agreed with this belief.



(Picture 5, results of question 8).

The next two questions were about silversmithing Museum of Piraeus Bank Cultural Foundation. The respondents had to select if they went to the museum or not during their visit in the city. The results are visualized in image 6, as we may say that 31% answer yes and the rest no (69%). It is evident that most participants were not interested in visiting this type of museum in Ioannina or they do not even know it. Actually, the inauguration of the museum was only three years ago into the castle of Ioannina, in one of the main meeting and sightseeing points of the city both for tourists and locals.



(Picture 6).

We could refer that the participants who said yes in question 8, were very positive about the outlook of silversmithing jewelry and other handicrafts as well. We can underline through picture 7 that 31 from 33 participants who visited the museum agreed with the belief that one visit to this thematic museum can formulate our perception about the tourism prosperity of silversmith in Ioannina. It is necessary to refer that silversmithing museum has a positive impact on local community and

economy, highlighting and preserving the intangible/tangible history of silversmithing of Epirus region. As Mr. Moschos said through our in-depth interview “The museums contribute very much in the projection of the region. Characteristic example is the new Museum of Silversmithing, which beyond the right view and the indication of the Silver art, organizes many things for non-adults predominantly regarding art” (Appendix B). Moreover, the museums shall play a key role, as they contribute to the rejuvenation of contemporary cities, i.e. they can be a means of reinforcing local economic development (Konsola, 2006, pp.108 in Papakitsou, 2018). Academia notice that cultural activities can hide a positive economic result. The establishment of a museum in an area can stimulate the development of other sectors of economic life such as tourism, food and beverage sector and retail etc. (Papakitsou, 2018).

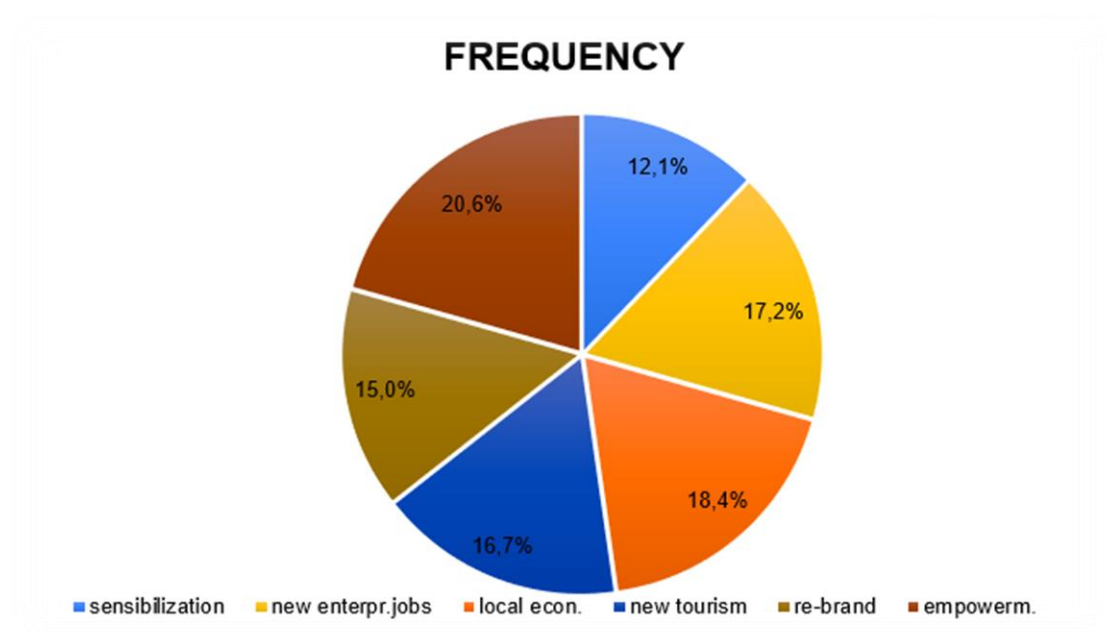
Question 10	
YES	NO
31	2

(Picture 7, “Your visit in Silversmithing Museum had a positive impact on your opinion regarding the tourism aspect of silversmithing products and their aspirations?”).

Furthermore, the electronic survey tried to investigate the fields in which one strategic marketing and branding plan of silversmithing products could contribute in a positive way. For this reason, one checkbox question was formulated, and the results emerged from the descriptive statistics and more specific, from the frequency of each box of question as it shows image 8 in table representation. The empowerment of enterprises, museums and local communities could be stronger through the design of one strategic sustainable plan, where the art and the products of silversmithing will play a key role. In particular, the frequency of the empowerment was 20,6% and it is the first between the other boxes. Then, it followed the rejuvenation of local economy with 18,4% and in the third place the creation of new enterprises and jobs in Ioannina because of the strategic plan (17,2%). We may see visually the results of the frequency in picture 9 in the next page.

	FREQUENCY	RELATIVE FREQUENCY
<i>sensibilization</i>	43	12,1%
<i>new enterpr.jobs</i>	61	17,2%
<i>local econ.</i>	65	18,4%
<i>new tourism</i>	59	16,7%
<i>re-brand</i>	53	15,0%
<i>empowerm.</i>	73	20,6%
SUM	354	100,0%

(picture 8, frequency of question 11 about the positive contribution of strategic plan regarding silversmithing)



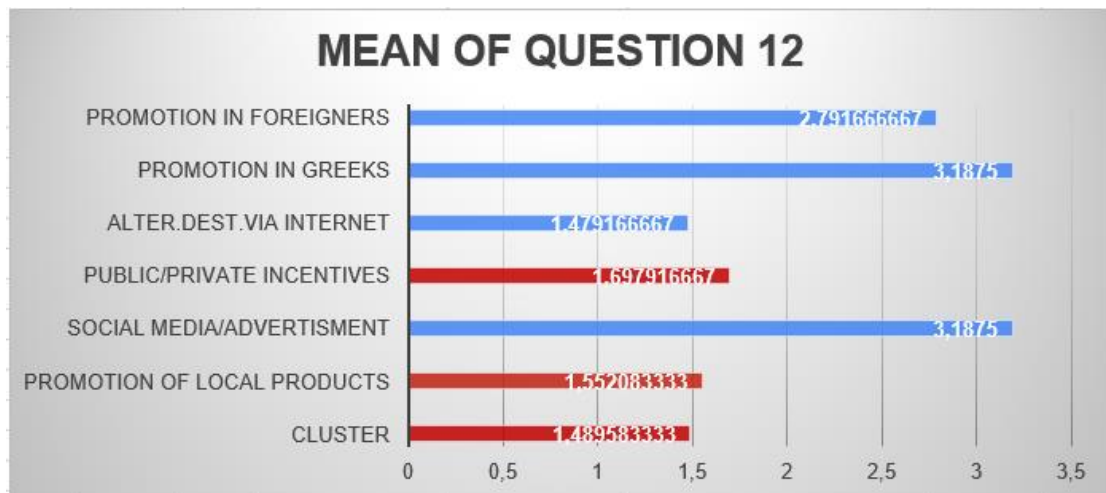
(picture 9, frequency of question 11).

The last question was likert-scale question and the participants had to select whether agree with one statement about the contribution of silversmithing in tourism or not.

The seven parts of questions were about:

- One cluster of local enterprises could benefit the local products and their national/international promotion.
- The promotion of local products by enterprises is very crucial for the attraction of new tourists.
- Visitors already know the Ioannina Silversmithing products through advertising and social media.
- The provision of incentives by the state/individuals would help to empower and/or create new businesses and activities around the Ioannina jewelry.
- The promotion of jewelry of Ioannina via social media/web platform could positively contribute to the projection of Ioannina as sustainable and alternative destination.
- The promotion of Ioannina's silversmithing products is strong to foreign audience.
- The promotion of Ioannina's silversmithing products is strong to Greek tourism audience.

In picture 10 we may observe the mean of each likert-scale part of the question.



(Picture 10, mean of likert-scale question).

The most occurring answers in totally or partly agree among 96 participants were the statements:

1. One cluster of local enterprises could benefit the local products and their national/international promotion,
2. The promotion of the jewelry of Ioannina through the social media/electronic platform could contribute positively to the emergence of Ioannina as an alternative and sustainable destination,
3. The promotion of local products by enterprises is very crucial for the attraction of new tourists,

Almost all participants totally agreed that creating one cluster of collaboration and promotion of local products could benefit the region in general. According to Evaggelou and Tsiliras (2013) “the benefits of engaging an enterprise in a cluster are obvious: boosting competitiveness and business growth prospects, ability to collaborate with specialized industry professionals, access to technology and other infrastructure, marketing and promotion synergies, savings in financial and human resources”.

It is true that the collaboration of stakeholders of Ioannina could reinforce the prosperity of Silversmith art and tradition and could rejuvenate the tourism and the economy in general. However, there is already an effort of cluster through *KEPAVI* (the

traditional handicraft center of Ioannina) that is in the city center of Ioannina, next to Pamvotida Lake and in a carefully maintained space of 10,000 sqm. Not only there is the retail station of silversmithing products, but there is a plan for workshops, museum, cultural events Hall, cafe – Restaurant as well (<http://www.kepavi.gr/el/home>).

Mister Moschos as resident and entrepreneur said that : "I don't think there's any such mood. Typical example of failing cooperation is KEPAVI. Probably for political and legal reasons and basic lack of education as for the cooperation among the producers, this effort did not thrive. I have not heard any other project present or future as well as there are many economic problems in the laboratories" (see Appendix B).

However, the mean score of creation of cluster (1.48) and promotion of the jewelry of Ioannina through the social media/electronic platform (1.47) were almost the same with numbers making them equally important in the first place.

Secondly, the participants partly agree (1.55 the mean) that the promotion of local products by enterprises is very crucial for the attraction of new tourists. In digital era, the enterprises should advertise not only the products but the philosophy behind them as well, because customers become more demanding especially during holidays.

6. Data analysis of case study 2: Soufli

The first step of the research was the creation of online questionnaire in Greek about the opinions and beliefs of visitors and residents of Soufli. The questions were the same with the questionnaire of Ioannina in order to conduct an equal data analysis and compare the conclusions of the two researches. The main goals of the questionnaire are the following:

- the projection of city's identity and its own characteristics,
- the diagnosis of the depth of the recognition of silk as tourism product,
- the diagnosis of the extent to which all stakeholders could be more aware, mobilized and collaborate harmoniously towards the creation and promotion

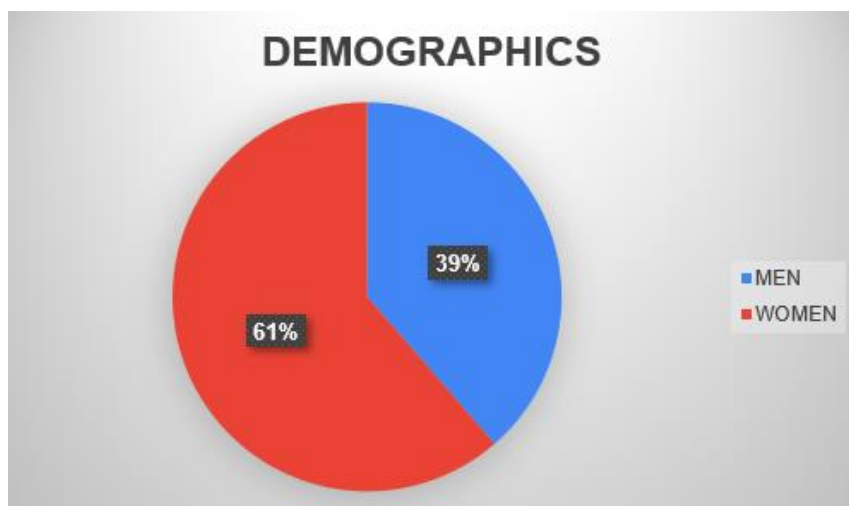
- the identification of the extent to which the art of silk production and the two museums of silk could positively contribute to the attraction of new investments, tourism groups and economic rejuvenation,
- The measurement of the public's knowledge and opinion about the local products of Soufli and their potential contribution to the tourism sector.

As far as online survey is concerned, it was distributed via Internet in various groups, from locals to people who visited once Soufli. The only criterion was the visit in the city, because these participants can have a solid opinion and belief about the characteristics of Soufli and its tourism potential. The survey was open to the audience from mid-September to late October. The total number of participants were 56 and 44 of them have visited or live in Soufli. Consequently, 78,6% responded in the first question that had visited Soufli. The total number of the sample is a limitation of the research, because Soufli belongs to borderland of Greece with Turkey and is a very small city of Evros region, with limited tourism visibility and promotional effort. However, it hides many commercial and tourism opportunities.

[illegible]

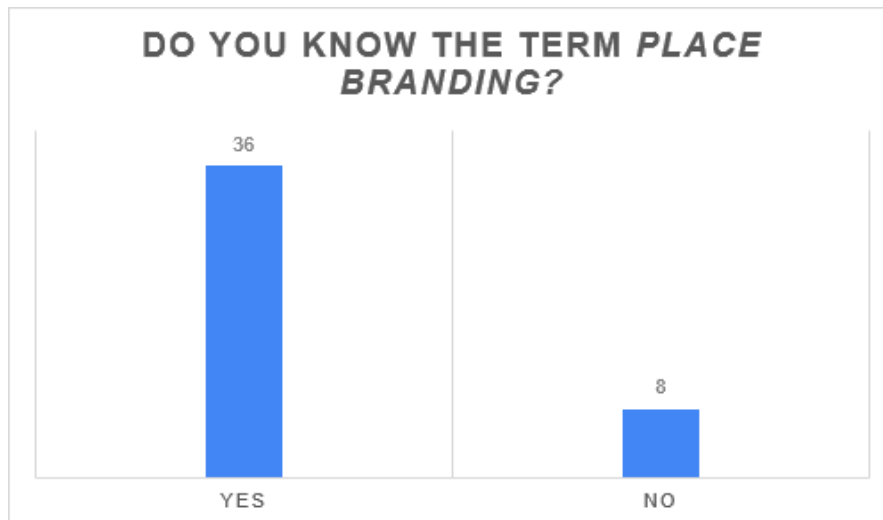
(Picture 11, coding of Soufli).

After coding all answers, two categories were created: the participants who answered yes in the first question and those who answered no (who did not visit Soufli and they cannot be included in the analysis). Then, 44 answers from the coding step were utilized for the descriptive statistics. As it arises from the results of descriptive statistics table, 61% were women and 39% were men and we may see it visually in picture 12. As regards the age groups, the majority of participants was the group 3 from 35 to 44 years old, but it should be referred that all age groups were almost equally represented in the sample.



(Picture 12, analogy of women and men in questionnaire of Soufli).

In the fourth question, participants were called to answer if they know the term *place branding*. We observe that almost the total number of participants said yes in image 13. As in case of Ioannina, audience was aware of the term *place branding* and its importance for the city's long-term sustainability.



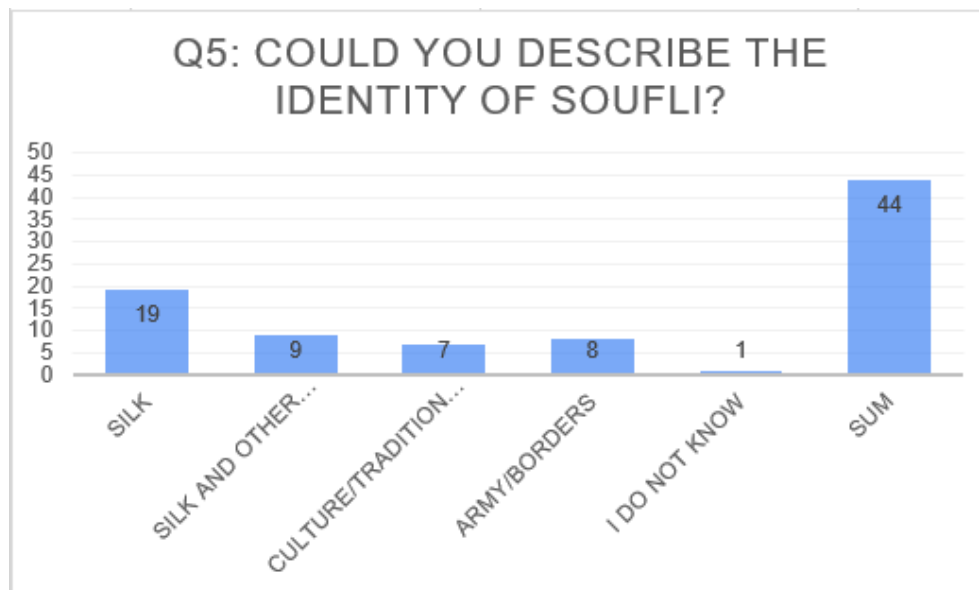
(picture 13, question 4 of online survey for the silk of Soufli).

The next question was related with the identity of Soufli and its distinctive characteristics among other Greek cities. That question was open-ended, and the participants had the opportunity to write key-words regarding Soufli. The people wrote interesting opinions about the image and the distinctiveness of this destination, but the results needed to be categorized into groups in order to be easily analyzed. For this reason, five categories of answers were created before coding:

1. Keywords: silk, Tzivre, cocoon houses, silk textiles, city of silk,
2. Keywords: Silk and other local products such as tsipouro and sausages,
3. Keywords: culture, tradition, history and environment,
4. Keywords: army, borders with Turkey, cold place, Evros region, borderland,
5. Other, I do not know.

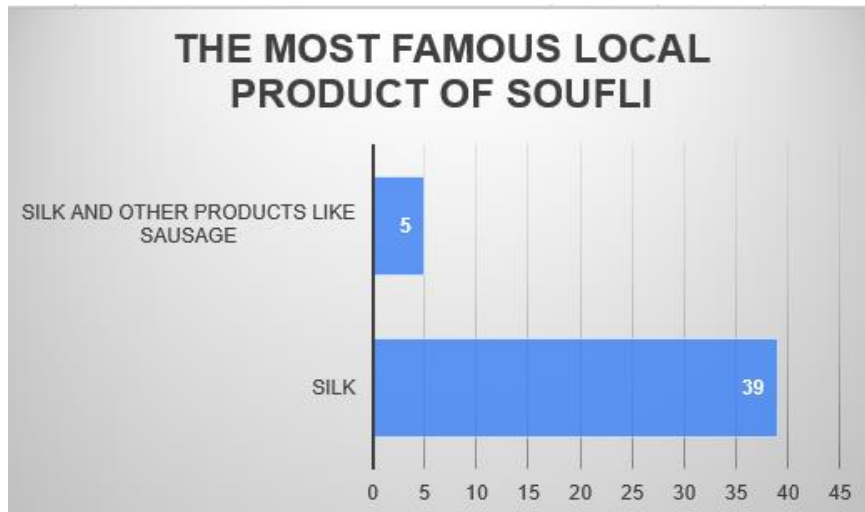
As it resulted from coding of results, most participants answered the first group of keywords and we may see it in the graph of picture 14. Without a doubt, the silk plays the main role in identity of Soufli (19 out of 44 wrote about silk, cocoon houses and silk textiles) and both visitors and locals connected the image of this small city with the silk production and many of them noticed that Soufli is *the city of Silk*. The following most occurring categories were firstly the silk and the reference to other

local products (9 answers) and secondly, the army and the borderland of Soufli, because many of them served in military there (8 answers).



(Picture 14, question 5).

The aim of the following question was to identify the most famous local product of Soufli. As the next image shows, silk was the most famous local product according to participants' opinion. K. Mouhtaridis (entrepreneur of silk and resident of the city) said during our discussion about the contribution of silk in tourism of Soufli in 4th October 2019 that "If we develop correctly the silk from the beginning-sericulture/bounce/weaving- Soufli will live a golden era" (see Appendix B).



(Picture 6, the most famous local product of Soufli).

Despite the length and the population of Soufli, there is an exceptional variety of local products except silk, from dairy products and honey to traditional sausages and wine/tsipouro. We might see in the website <http://www.visitsoufli.com/> the online catalog of producers with contact details as well. This initiative is quite helpful either to a new visitor either to residents.

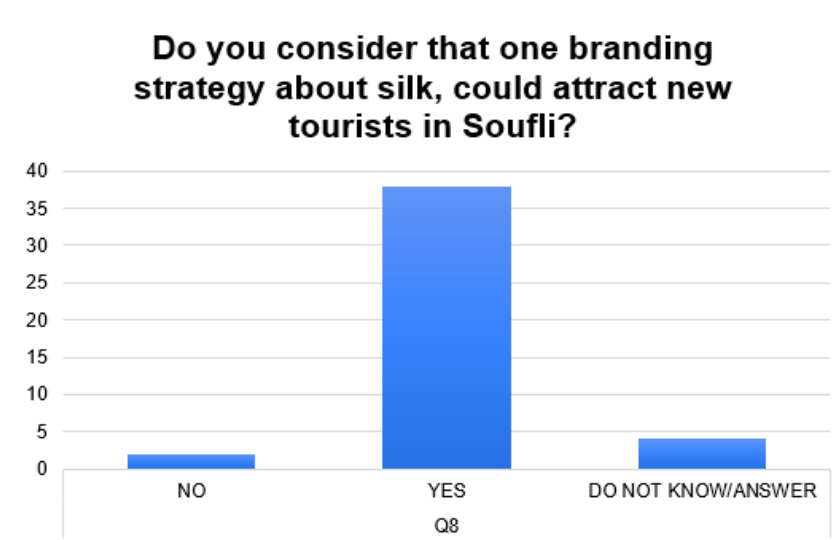
We continue with the next question of online survey as regards the existence of a tourism plan about the local products of this destination.



(picture 16, question 7).

As we see in picture 16, we may conclude that 71% of participants answered no or do not know. It is true that one promotion effort or strategy of local products in Soufli is not exist. However, the utilization of pure silk of Soufli from Greek fashion designers such as Zeus+Dione and Parthenis revitalize centuries-old silk tradition (<http://www.ekathimerini.com/245053/article/ekathimerini/life/greek-fashion-firms-revitalize-centuries-old-silk-tradition>). This effort could be considered as a catalyst not only for the rejuvenation of local economy, but for the promotion of the destination as well. We should underline that there is no controlled initiative from the part of municipality or the prefecture of Evros.

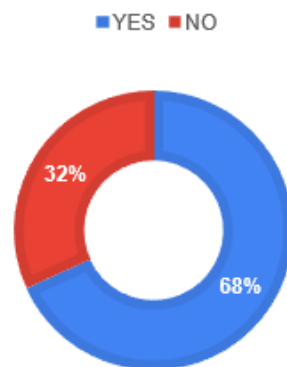
In question 8, the sample was obliged to respond if one branding strategy of Soufli's silk will able to attract new tourist groups. The results are visualized in picture 17, we can summarize that 38 out of total 44 respondents answered yes. Even Mister Mouhtaridis said that "a proper strategic plan with evolution and monitoring of the situation" could ameliorate the tourism identity of Soufli, attracting new visitors at the same time (Appendix B).



(Picture 17, question 8).

Furthermore, the next two questions were about the two museums of Silk in Soufli. Even though Soufli is a very small city, it has rich tradition and vivid cultural activity. The respondents were called to answer if they had visited some of the two museums about silk art and production in Soufli. In image 18 , we can observe that almost all participants of the survey said yes (68%) and 32% ticked the box no.

**DID YOU VISIT SOME OF THE TWO
MUSEUMS OF SILK IN SOUFLI?**



(Picture 18, question 9).

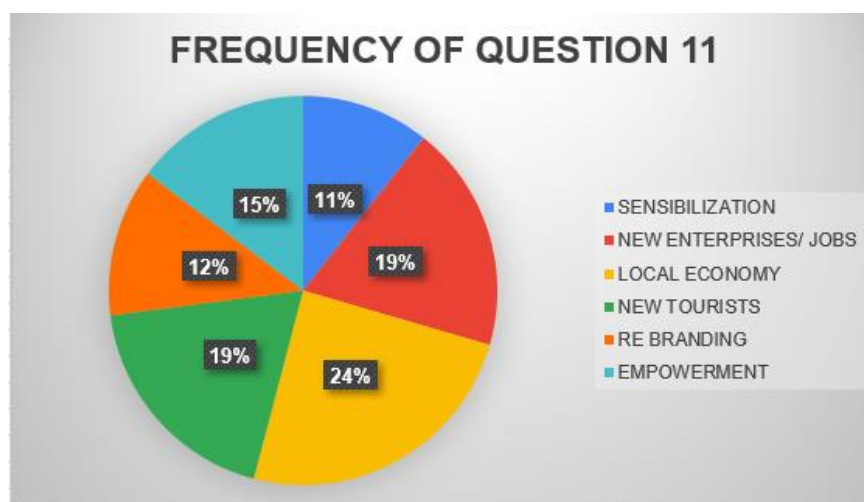
Furthermore, those participants who answered yes in previous question, were obliged to respond if their visit to silk museums changed positively their opinion about the tourism aspect of silk as local product. Through the results, we may see -in picture 19- clearly that museums can contribute positively in destination and promote efficiently the local intangible (the silk production) and tangible (the products made of silk) heritage of Soufli. Moreover, heritage and shopping of silk products in our case can be good combination for destination branding and the sustainable development of Soufli. “It is common to find clusters of shops near heritage attractions and in case of museums, folk-life centers, and some old churches, shopping is available inside the attraction itself. From a sustainable planning and management, it is important to assure that the stores...and the items for sale do not diminish the heritage value of the city...” (Timothy, p.165, 2005). The partnership of shopping and heritage of silk could create a unique identity for the small city of Soufli and local community might be able to reap the commercial and social benefits. The two museums of silk can

contribute in a positive way to the tourism prosperity of the region. Thus, if we consider the silk as a cultural product as well, because of its long tradition and heritage, the stakeholders can create a strong image combination of culture and tourism, laying the foundations for the long-term and sustainable development of the destination. As Karachalis said (2007) in page 41 “the city's identification with a specific cultural image is an effective way of promoting it as a tourist product, while at the same time creating a sense of pride for the members of the local community and strengthening their cultural Identity”.

Q10	
YES	NO
30	0

(Picture 19, question 10).

Therefore, one of the main goals of online survey was to identify the fields in which one strategic marketing and branding plan of silk products could have a positive impact. For this reason, one checkbox question was created, and the results arise from the descriptive statistics and the frequency of each box of question as it shows image 20 below.



(Picture 20, frequency of question 11 about the positive contribution of tourism marketing plan of silk products in Soufli).

The most frequent answers among 44 participants were the following statements:

- I. 24% respond the rejuvenation of local economy,
- II. 19% the attraction of new tourism groups all year long,
- III. 19% the creation of new enterprises and new job positions in Soufli.

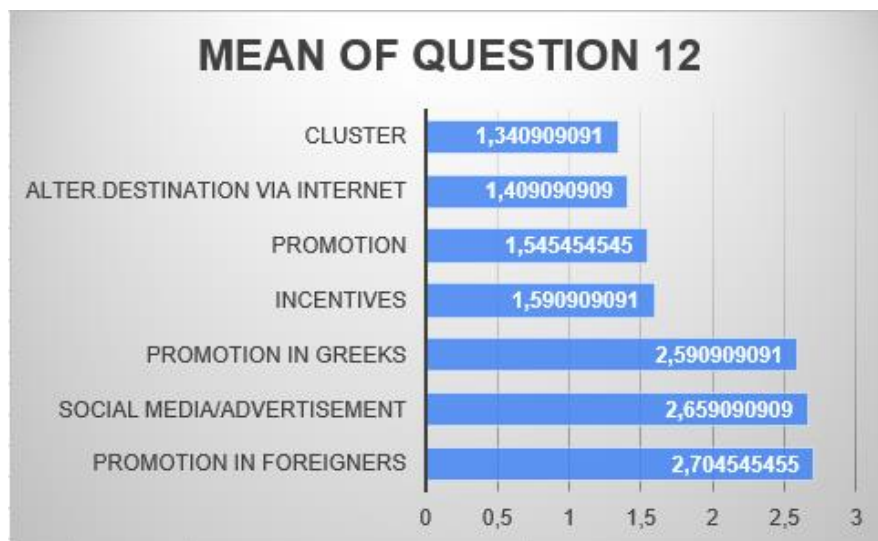
“The state, region or municipality is generally responsible for the overall place image (even though, collaboration and commitment of citizens is essential) leaving the marketing of specific services to the end-user to private operators. Place branding is useful to destinations, by creating an *umbrella brands* that provides consumers with a specific image and status not only of the destination itself, but of the products and services that are marketed from this place” (Real, p.5, 2016). It is worthwhile mentioning that Soufli is a small city and many citizens are employees or entrepreneurs to silk factories, stores, cultural unions and museums about silk. Consequently, it is essential that one solid marketing plan as regards silk product be created in order to boost the national and international tourism image of Soufli. A positive place image makes it cheaper and easier for producers to attract potential customers (Anholt, 2010).

As in previous case study of Ioannina’s Silversmith, the question 12 was created according the likert-scale type and the sample had to select whether agree with one fact about the contribution of Soufli’s silk in tourism or not. The seven parts of question were about:

- One cluster of local enterprises could benefit the local products and their national/international promotion.
- The promotion of local products by enterprises is very crucial for the attraction of new tourists.
- Visitors already know silk products of Soufli through advertising and social media.
- The provision of incentives by the state/individuals would help to empower and/or create new businesses and activities around the silk of Soufli.

- The promotion of silk of Soufli via social media/web platform could positively contribute to the projection of the city as sustainable and alternative destination.
- The promotion of Soufli's silk products is strong to Greek audience.
- The promotion of Soufli's silk products is strong to international tourism audience.

As image 21 shows below, almost all the sample totally or partly agree that the creation of cluster could be beneficial for the promotion of local products (1,34 the mean), the promotion of silk via social media channels and/or web platform may have a positive impact in the projection of the city as an alternative destination (1,40 the mean) and the promotion activity of enterprises is important for the attraction of new tourism flow (1,54).



(Picture 21, question 12: Please note whether they find you consistent the following- I agree completely, I agree in part, neutral attitude, do not agree, do not know/no answer).

It is true that the creation of cluster by local enterprises of silk could be beneficial for the collaboration of entrepreneurs, for the successful projection of silk products and for the tourism and economic rejuvenation of the destination. The first step may be

one discussion between the stakeholders of silk entrepreneurship, silk museums and public authority in order to examine the possibility of a synergy and common actions of cooperation.

The second average answer of the sample was that the promotion of silk via social media channels and/or web platform may have a positive impact in the projection of the city as an alternative destination. Participants almost totally agreed that the promotion of silk of Soufli via social media such as Facebook and Instagram campaigns will strengthen the tourism identity of the city. Social media could assist the destination of Soufli to become competitive and attractive to potential customers. Furthermore, one potential web platform of products, activities, infrastructure about Soufli's silk could have a positive impact on long-term sustainability of the destination and attraction of investors (Hall et al., 2005). As far as local entrepreneurs of silk are concerned, Mister Mouhtaridis said during our interview in 4th October that "e-marketing mostly; good tourist consciousness; general good climate" are those actions which the companies and local operators must follow in Soufli in order to flourish tourism through silk (Appendix B). Identical to the above statements is the promotion actions of local enterprises which is crucial for the attraction of tourism flow.

Another interesting evidence of question 12 was that the participants did not agree/have neutral attitude with the opinion that the promotion of Soufli's silk products is strong to Greek and international audience. Even though Soufli is called as the city of silk, the promotional efforts are limited or non-existent yet. During the research, we investigated that World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) promotes Soufli in its website (<http://silkroad.unwto.org/content/soufli-silk-town-greece>). This is a great opportunity for promotion, because Soufli is a part of UNWTO's silk road initiative and the city of Alexandroupoli, in Greece, has hosted the 1st International UNWTO Western Silk Road Workshop held on 26-27 April 2017. The event was jointly organized by UNWTO, the Ministry of Tourism of Greece and the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. It seems that Soufli and its silk is gaining attention by prestigious organizations and authorities and the well-designed promotion of Soufli's silk heritage in tourism groups is a priority nowadays.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Summing up, the two destinations need to follow tools of *place marketing* such as:

- internal and external (SWOT) analysis of suppliers, competitors, consumers and other stakeholders,
- segmentation and targeting,
- planning process,
- product development,
- pricing,
- distribution,
- and promotion / communication in order to establish a sustainable destination,

with emphasis on local products (Langer, 2001). According to Langer (2001), the authorities and the other stakeholders of destinations must involve in the design and implementation of place marketing plan, playing an important role. Therefore, public authorities should start thinking more to invest rather than spend as to reach the sustainable development and wealth of their places. With no doubt, the overall effort should continue with the communication among all stakeholders from academics and public authorities to residents in order to flesh out their views regarding the long-term tourism and economy plan of destination. It is essential that our two case studies conduct a marketing plan which aims at empowering the enterprises, museums and local communities, where the art and the products of silversmithing and silk will set up as a priority. Then, the rejuvenation of local economy and the creation of new enterprises and jobs in Ioannina and Soufli shall be respectively vital. As Deffner and Metaxas (2005) said, the final strategic place marketing plan should be based on the distinctive characteristics and particularities of cities such as Ioannina and Soufli's case studies, which are the high-quality local products among them.

The research findings showed that local products of Soufli and Ioannina can strengthen the positive image of destinations, attracting new groups of tourists and creating new possibilities for economic and social development of each place. Even if

the number of respondents in electronic surveys was not adequate for well-founded conclusions, the results were enough regarding the brand awareness of local products in Ioannina and Soufli.

More specific, the two most famous local products in Ioannina are local/traditional desserts and silversmith products with the same number retrieving from the questionnaire. This means that the contribution of silversmithing in the tourism promotion and sustainability of Ioannina is not the first significant, but it can be combined with the other local products of the region. Consequently, silversmithing can be added to a visitor's interest map combined with the rest. For example, a visitor comes to Ioannina to taste the syrup desserts and cheese in Metsovo, seeing afterwards a couple of silversmith laboratories and buying a handmade jewel as a souvenir.

On the other hand, the contribution of silk in tourism and place development of Soufli could be well established in the minds of participants. Silk products can constitute a new approach both for tourism and economic development in the small town of Evros region. In the direction of the creation of this new identity, there is a need for stable and continuous cooperation between enterprises and private and public sector bodies in order to design and implement new plans for the sustainability of tourism and any other aspect of destinations. The implementation of synergies among local enterprises should play a key role for the following years and private and public authorities should reap the benefits of cooperation and implementation of new ideas. With the establishment of synergies through the promotion and extraversion of silk, Soufli can be more competitive destination and be included into the global map of silk road destinations.

Creating a cluster of enterprises, in silk of Soufli and silversmithing sector in Ioannina respectively, the destinations may find exceptional place development opportunities. This creation of cluster does not necessarily mean the need to create a common business base, but could at first level be defined as a common effort in the sectors of marketing, promotion of local products, externalization of enterprises and the enhancement of positive image of residents and visitors about the place (Porter, 1998). For example, the producers in Soufli and retailers of silk can collaborate in order

to open their factories and stores to the audience, offering the opportunity to become visible and sell their products. That effort may enhance the long term sustainability of each place and many destination management organizations (DMO) adopt practices of online visibility as well, in order to promote the activities of craftsmanship, shopping and cultural spots; a great example is national DMO of Turkey which have a broad catalog of shopping and craftsmanship experiences with detailed information (<https://www.goturkeytourism.com/things-to-do/things-to-do-and-see-in-turkey.html>).

Another policy for the long-term tourism development could be the boost of strategic cooperation with other professional unions and/or cultural institutions and countries. For example, the reinforcement of synergy between the union of jewelers of Thessaloniki and Ioannina and the cultural/business bonds between the silk museum of Soufli and the National silk museum of China.

Therefore, the promotion and sale of silk and silversmithing products via social media channels and/or web platform may have a positive impact both on the projection of the cities as alternative destinations and their economic development in general. Nowadays, "Social media are gaining prominence as an element of destination marketing organization (DMO) marketing strategy at a time...social media offers DMOs with a tool to reach a global audience with limited resources" (Hays et al., 2011). Nowadays, the effective use of information and telecommunications technologies in combination with the innovative minds, may positively influence the development of business opportunities. Therefore, knowledge of up-to-date technologies is vital, and with the assistance of entrepreneurial spirit and innovation, they have the power to exert a strong influence on the economic development of a society and its long-term sustainable development. If local stakeholders design well social media campaigns, the return of investment (ROI) in tourism flow will be high. For example, Instagram influencers can advertise products or can write articles about the destination, in collaboration with local entrepreneurs and tourism authorities as a promotional tool, having as a scenery picturesque places in Epirus and Evros district correspondingly.

Furthermore, one web portal of interactive information between local tourism providers and visitors about local events, must-see locations and addresses of jewel laboratories and craft shops of silk in Soufli can drastically change the tourism and economic prospect of regions. It is worth mentioning that the official website of Ioannina and the official website of Soufli tried to create an online catalog of must-see locations, activities and addresses of craftsmen about silversmithing and silk correspondingly, but still they are in a process. One useful idea could also be the use of the online calendar tool with all the events which take part in Ioannina and Soufli and the creation of newsletter for those visitors who want to be informed on recent news, tourism experiences and events. These tactics have been already utilized by many cities around the world and the results are very encouraging.

Another policy to add in the sustainable tourism development of destinations via local products is the further participation and the active presence of thematic museums of silversmithing and silk into their communities. The preponderance of participants in quantitative research with the form of questionnaires agreed that the museums of silversmithing in Ioannina and silk in Soufli have the potential to change their opinion about the tourism prospect of silversmithing and silk in each case correspondingly. Museums can emphasize not only on the museology aspect of their space, but on the promotion and sale of silk and silversmith products inside the gift shop and the establishment of bazaar in collaboration with local entrepreneurs as well. Furthermore, the thematic museums of silversmithing and silk must provide detailed information about the local producers, their laboratories and the addresses where they are located.

Another proposal could be the hiring process of a new high-skilled work force that will design/promote and control the goals of the strategic destination plan. This practice will also mobilize the young to come back to their place of origin, especially in Soufli, since new jobs will be created for the establishment and the update of the following services:

- I. web platform of interactive information between local tourism providers and visitors about local events, must-see locations and addresses of jewel laboratories in Ioannina and craft shops of silk in Soufli,

- II. creation of social media campaigns for the promotion of local products and probably the creation of e-shops,
- III. assistance on the cluster establishment,
- IV. incentives for the employment opportunities to the fields of silversmithing and silk production,
- V. creation and overhaul in complementary activities such as accommodation, food and beverage sector and retail.

The limitations of the research were the limited number of participants, especially in case of Soufli, and the limited academic references about the contribution of local products in place development.

It is highly recommended that the research continue with communication with all the actors in the local community from business unions, municipalities, political power, consumers, visitors, members of the academic community to other professionals and workers in complementarity sectors), so as to broaden their views on the subject of the contribution of local products in sustainable development, gathering more proposals towards the involvement and cooperation of all the stakeholders.

Finally, the previous recommendations and the overall research for the destinations of Ioannina and Soufli, also concern many cities that have not exploited yet this competitive advantage, which have similar characteristics in terms of the population, high quality and dynamics of their local products.

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Appendix

- A. Online questionnaire created by google forms “The contribution of local products in establishing sustainable and alternative destinations; case study Silversmithing of Ioannina”. (The first archive was written in Greek in order to attract easily participants to the survey).

The following questionnaire is part of the dissertation in the Postgraduate program Hospitality and Tourism Management of the International University of Greece. The main objective of this work is to investigate the degree of promotion and projection of local and traditional products, present in the city of Ioannina and the establishment of a strong place identity that will be designed to attract visitors. The completion of the questionnaire requires about five minutes of your time.

Question 1: Did you visit Ioannina?

1. Yes
2. No

Question 2: What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

Question 3: What is your age group?

1. 18-24

2. 25-34

3. 35-44

4. 45-60

5. 60+

Question 4: Do you know the term place branding?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Do not know/answer

Question 5: Describe with keywords the identity of Ioannina and what it is that makes it stand out among other cities.....(long-text answer)

Question 6: Could you mention the most famous local product of Ioannina?.....(short-text answer)

Question 7: Do you know if there is a project of tourist promotion of local products of Ioannina to potential visitors?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Do not know/answer

Question 8: Do you think that if a branding image is developing in Ioannina around the silversmithing, it will attract new groups of tourists?

1. Yes

2. No

3. Do not know/answer

Question 9: During your visit in Ioannina, did you visit the Museum of Silversmithing in Ioannina Castle? (belongs to the museum network of Piraeus Bank)

1. Yes

2. No

Question 10: If you answered yes to the previous question, can you tell if you left a positive impression and if you changed your perception of the dynamics of silversmith as a tourist product?

1. Yes
2. No

Question 11: In which of the following fields do you think it will be possible to positively contribute the strategic plan around the silversmithing products of Ioannina? (select as many fields as you need, checkbox question)

1. Raising awareness of local society and stakeholders on the prospects of silversmithing
2. Creating new businesses and jobs
3. Rejuvenation of the local economy
4. Attracting new and more foreign tourists throughout the year
5. Formation of a new place concept for the city of Ioannina (re-branding)
6. Empowerment of businesses, museums and associations dealing with silversmith

Question 12: Please note whether you are finding consistent the following (1: I completely agree, 2: I agree in part, 3: Neutral attitude, 4: I do not agree, 5: I do not know/no answer)

1. A local business network (cluster) would benefit local products and their domestic/international visibility.
2. The promotion of local products by businesses is very important in attracting new tourists.
3. Visitors already know the Ioannina Silversmith products through advertising and social networks.
4. The provision of incentives by the state/individuals would help in the empowerment and/or creation of new businesses and activities around the jewelry of Ioannina.

5. The promotion of the jewelry of Ioannina through the social media/web platform could contribute positively to the emergence of Ioannina as an alternative and sustainable destination.

6. The projection of the silversmithing of Ioannina is strong in the foreign tourist public.

7. The projection of the silversmithing of Ioannina is strong in the Greek tourist public.

- B.** Online questionnaire created by Google Forms "The contribution of local products in establishing sustainable and alternative destinations; case study silk of Soufli". (The first archive of online survey is written to Greek in order to find easily more participants).

The following questionnaire is part of the dissertation in the Postgraduate program Hospitality and Tourism Management of the International Hellenic University. The main objective of this project will be to investigate the degree of promotion and spotlight of local and traditional products which exist in Soufli and Ioannina (in another questionnaire) and the establishment of a strong place image with the purpose of attracting visitors. The completion of the questionnaire will take about 5 minutes.

Question 1: Did you visit Soufli?

1. Yes
2. No

Question 2: What is your gender?

1. Male
2. Female

Question 3: What is your age group?

1. 18-24
2. 25-34

3. 35-44
4. 45-60
5. 60+

Question 4: Do you know the term place branding?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know/answer

Question 5: Describe with keywords the identity of Soufli and what it is that makes it stand out among other cities.....(long-text answer)

Question 6: Could you mention the most famous local product of Soufli?.....(short-text answer)

Question 7: Do you know if there is a project of tourist promotion of local products of Soufli to potential visitors?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know/answer

Question 8: Do you think that if a branding image is developing in Soufli around the silk products, it will attract new groups of tourists?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Do not know/answer

Question 9: During your visit in Soufli, did you visit one of the two museums of silk?

1. Yes
2. No

Question 10: If you answered yes to the previous question, can you tell if you left a positive impression and if you changed your perception of the dynamics of silk as a tourist product?

1. Yes
2. No

Question 11: In which of the following fields do you think it will be possible to positively contribute the strategic plan about silk products of Soufli? (select as many fields as you need, checkbox question)

1. Raising awareness of local society and stakeholders on the prospects of silversmithing
2. Creating new businesses and jobs
3. Rejuvenation of the local economy
4. Attracting new and more foreign tourists throughout the year
5. Formation of a new place concept for the city of Soufli (re-branding)
6. Empowerment of businesses, museums and associations dealing with silk

Question 12: Please note whether you are finding consistent the following (1: I completely agree, 2: I agree in part, 3: Neutral attitude, 4: I do not agree, 5: I do not know/no answer)

1. A local business network (cluster) would benefit local products and their domestic/international visibility.
2. The promotion of local products by businesses is very important in attracting new tourists.
3. Visitors already know the Soufli's silk products through advertising and social networks.
4. The provision of incentives by the state/individuals would help in the empowerment and/or creation of new businesses and activities around the silk of Soufli.
5. The promotion of the silk through the social media/web platform could contribute positively to the emergence of Soufli as an alternative and sustainable destination.

6. The projection of the silk of Soufli is strong in the foreign tourist public.
7. The projection of the silk of Soufli is strong in the Greek tourist public.

C. QUESTIONS FOR TOURIST VIEW IOANNINA'S SILVERSMITHING

Name/Surname of the interlocutor: Thodoris Moschos, employee in the branch of Ioannina's silversmith, vertical production and sale. Graduate educator at the Department of Ioannina. (Interview via Internet in 22nd October 2019).

1. Do you think that local actors/associations/museums contribute to the emergence and development of the site through silversmith? And if so, in what ways do they do it?

The local authorities in European programs are forced to promote the art of silversmith in global exhibitions. In their view, they do not contribute substantially to the indication of local products because their goal is the satisfaction of individual pseudo-luxury needs. In the second squadron, the substantive and fundamental reason for which they are referred to the exhibitions abroad is forthcoming. For the commercial organizations have no substantial influence and on the most serves political parties' interest. Some of them are trying to show up. The museums contribute very much in the indication of our place. A characteristic example is the new Museum of Silver Art which, beyond the right view and projection of silversmithing, organizes many activities for non-adults predominantly as far as art is concerned.

2. Please indicate with a few key words what differentiates Ioannina as a destination and why it should be chosen by a visitor against other destinations.

Silversmith, dairy products, historical and religious museums, natural wealth, virgin areas for hiking, eco-tourism, alternative tourism.

3. Are the institutions and the municipality open to the possibility of creating a cooperation network designed to promote jewelry and other silversmithing products to potential tourists? (e.g. the creation and advertising of an electronic platform that will bring together all the craftsmen and shopkeepers of silversmith, museums and silversmithing associations)

I don't think there's any such mood. Typical example of failing cooperating productions is the KEPAVI. Probably for political and legal reasons and basic lack of education as for the cooperation from the part of the producers failed this effort. I have not heard any other effort- present or future- as well as there are many economic problems in the silversmith laboratories.

4. Do you think that the Ioannina jewelry has a strong brand, capable of helping the promotion of Ioannina as an alternative destination?

He could only attract a small portion of tourists in case of strengthening its brand with the silver. It would be easier for the incredible natural beauty offered by our land and secondly, the jewel. A successful example is the unilateral promotion of Metsovo as a tourist destination!

5. Do you believe that the jewel and the other local products that the city of Ioannina have shown are satisfactory to foreign tourists and to the Greeks? (most according to the results so far the electronic questionnaire does not believe it)

No, they don't go to the foreign tourists at all. And almost none to the Greek tourists.

6. Do you think that a strategic plan to manage the image of the site focused on Silversmith will contribute to the tourism development of Ioannina? As in the man like individual who smearing his main characteristics to charm the majorities of his across. So a city must smearing what will draw the majority of its tourists. In our case, natural lands. Secondly, all the rest like the jewel.

7. Accepting that the products of silversmithing are the local product, we can assume that their proper and targeted visibility will contribute to the creation of a new site image, capable to attract new groups of tourists or it is better to become another kind

of tourist promotion of the site e.g. around the environmental wealth of the area due to Pamvotida (environmental tourism)?

I will agree with the environmental wealth again. I'll disagree with the Pamvotis as a center of contemplation. Main interest could have the four of villagers like Jumerka and Zagorochoria.

8. What actions should the companies and local authorities of Ioannina should take to flourish tourism through silversmith?

Internet updates for the upcoming tourists of Ioannina.

9. As a resident and entrepreneur, do you consider that the local community and the institutions of Ioannina are facing the tourist projection of silversmith and local products of the city in general?

Minimum is as well as they do not know most of their value and their uniqueness in some cases.

10. Do you believe that there is already a common front of cooperation between public and local companies that will have the main objective of attracting investors, e.g. for the creation and support of artistic and cultural groups, associations that will operate around From Silversmiths and will work with the local community?

Not even.

11. Can you suggest some ways to revive the local economy and tourism development of Ioannina?

Projection, Biggest cooperation between the laboratories and the trade, proper utilization of European funds for the development acts of the tourism of Ioannina. Events, activities, festivals with emphasis on our assets.

D. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TOURIST VIEW OF METAXIOU

Name/surname of interlocutor: Mouhtaridis Costas, businessman employed in Silk and a resident of Soufli (personal interview in 4th October 2019).

1. Do you think that local actors/associations/museums contribute to the emergence and development of the site through silk? And if so, in what ways do they do it?

Not at all.

2. I would ask you to indicate with a few key words what distinguishes Soufli as a destination and why it should be chosen by a visitor against other destinations.

30% for the army for the memories, flag of Evros the silk, beautiful small city but thoughtful.

3. Are the institutions and the municipality open to the possibility of creating a cooperation network, designed to promote silk to potential tourists? (e.g. the creation and advertising of an electronic platform that will bring together all the producers and shopkeepers of silk, crafts, museums and silk clubs)

I believe so, but they haven't approached us.

4. Do you think that Silk has a strong brand, capable of helping to promote Soufli as an alternative destination? (to mention that almost 100% of the participants in the questionnaire reported silk as the best-known local product)

1000% I believe this statement.

5. Do you think that silk and other local products that have the Soufli are displayed satisfactorily to foreign tourists and to the Greeks? (Most according to the questionnaire results so far do not believe it)

No, it is not existent.

6. Do you think that a strategic plan to manage the image of the site will improve the tourist identity of the Soufli to future visitors?

A proper strategic plan with evolution and monitoring of the situation.

7. Accepting that Soufli is the most famous local product, we can assume that the correct and targeted projection of silk will contribute to the creation of a new site image, capable to attract new groups of tourists or is it better to make another kind

of tourist promotion of the site e.g. around the environmental wealth of Evros or Dadia park?

If we develop correctly the silk from the beginning, the Soufli's sericulture, weaving etc., Soufli will live Golden era.

8. What actions should the companies and local operators have to follow Soufli to flourish tourism through silk?

The e-marketing, mostly; good tourism mentality, general good conviviality.

9. As a resident in the region of Soufli, do you consider that the local community and the bodies of Soufli are focused on the tourist promotion of local products and especially silk for their benefit?

Not existent.

10. Do you believe that there is already a common front of cooperation between public and local businesses that will have the main objective of attracting investors? (e.g. for the creation of a school of silk, creative artistic groups, clubs that will operate around silk and collaborate with the local community)

I don't think so. They came from the Chinese embassy, even the ambassador, who's the origin is near national silk museum of China and our authorities did not leap at the opportunity to exploit it.